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Contra leader says CIA wanted him out

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Special to The Sun

MIAMI — Edgar Chamorro said his dismissal over the weekend from his leadership post in the main Nicaraguan rebel group was done at the behest of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Mr. Chamorro has been openly and frequently critical of the CIA, which has funneled some \$80 million to the rebels over three years and has advised the group on military as well as political matters.

Mr. Chamorro said in an interview last week that the FDN has sold its soul to the CIA. He said that his dismissal was a symptom of that.

"The group now equates criticism of the CIA with criticism of the FDN," he said.

Adolfo Calero, president of National Directorate of the Nicaraguan Democratic Force (FDN), the largest and best equipped Nicaraguan rebel group organized by the CIA, said Mr. Chamorro was expelled from the directorate for being a "loose cannon."

Mr. Calero said Mr. Chamorro had pledged to keep silent in July after his openness about rebel activity angered the new leadership of the Honduran military which had asked the group to keep a low profile. The FDN is based in Honduras.

He added that the decision to expel Mr. Chamorro was made unanimously by the six remaining members of the directorate and that it was "long overdue."

"By being a loose cannon, Chamorro excluded himself," said Mr. Calero. He said the expulsion also was in response to pressure from many FDN members who said Mr. Chamorro was abusing his office as chief of communications to express personal grievances against the CIA and was damaging the chances of getting more U.S. funds in February when Congress will restudy the issue.

Congress cut off all funds to the counterrevolutionaries in May after the CIA role in the mining of Nicaraguan harbors was disclosed.

Mr. Chamorro has charged that the CIA has tried to deceive the FDN as well as Congress and the American people by telling each what they wanted to hear but telling the truth to no one.

The FDN's declared goal, Mr. Chamorro said, is to topple the Sandinista government. In the past he said he got into trouble with the CIA for saying that high-level CIA agents had told him that was also the ultimate goal of the Reagan administration.

The administration says it is aiding the "Contras" so that they can interdict Nicaraguan weapons sent to El Salvador and apply pressure on the Sandinistas to moderate their totalitarian tendencies.

U.S. law forbids the funding by the government or citizens of groups trying to topple a government not at war with the United States.

Mr. Chamorro said that the FDN had nothing to do with the mining of the ports or the bombing of a Salvadoran radio antenna inside Nicaragua.

Mr. Chamorro said the CIA used the FDN as a front for its own military activities, carried out by Salvadorans, Ecuadorans and others.

"We weren't consulted at all," he said, adding that both after the mining and bombing incident he had been handed a written communique for broadcast by the deputy CIA station chief in Honduras in which the FDN claimed responsibility for the action.

"Why would we target a Salvadoran radio station?" asked Mr. Chamorro.

Mr. Calero said in a telephone interview that Mr. Chamorro's claims of CIA deception are "hogwash."

"I wasn't told that [the U.S. government would back us all the way to Managua] and if they had told me, I wouldn't have believed them. We all knew what we were getting into."

Mr. Chamorro also said he was angered by what he saw as a process in which far rightist elements within the FDN were using the group to regain lost properties in Nicaragua rather than to establish democracy.